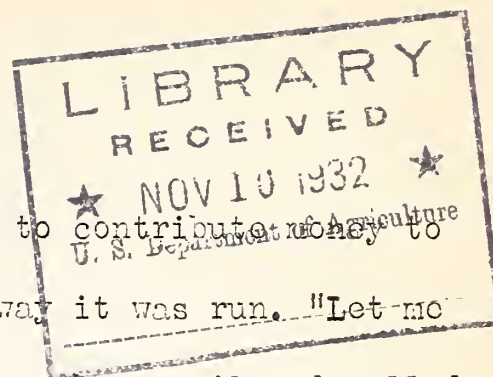


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CHOOSING KITCHEN KNIVES
AND KEEPING THEM SHARP



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Did you ever hear the story of the man who was asked to contribute money to an orphan asylum? He agreed to do so if he approved of the way it was run. "Let me see the kitchen first", he said. He took off the lid of the garbage pail and pulled out some thick potato peelings. "Very wasteful," was his only comment. And when they asked him for a check, he said, "I'll give you exactly ten cents -- to get your paring knife sharpened."

Undoubtedly it is wasteful to keep on using a dull paring knife or the wrong kind of knife for any particular job. Most of us would not have as much at stake as the institution in this story, but if we believe ourselves efficient we might well look to our kitchen knives, among our other kitchen tools. Any good cook knows that she can work faster and produce more attractive looking dishes if she has the right kinds of knives for slicing cleanly, paring thinly, and taking out blemishes and inedible parts without waste.

What knives does a good cook need? A butcher knife, a bread knife, three paring knives, a wide spatula and a narrow one, and kitchen scissors. She may add a special grapefruit knife, if she wishes, and of course there will be a carver for use at the table. Keep all of these knives within handy reach of the kitchen table, says the Bureau of Home Economics of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but not in a drawer if you want the edges to stay sharp. Get the man of the house, or the boy who likes to make things, to put up a knife rack near the sink or work table where each knife fits into a slot of its own. In addition to losing their edges, knives in drawers sometimes cause badly cut fingers.

A good knife has a handle of the right size and shape to be comfortable in your hand -- large enough so it doesn't cramp your hand and small enough so you can get a good grip on it. Notice how the blade is inserted in the handle. If it is riveted or cemented it will not loosen or pull out. Also a good knife has proper balance between the blade and the handle. This gives more comfort in using and a quicker, more even cutting stroke. The blade should be made of a good grade of steel, preferably stainless.

A good bread or slicing knife needs a long, tapering point and a flexible blade so it will cut thin slices with little pressure. A carving knife for cutting hot, soft meats needs a shorter blade and a sturdier one. Paring knives with a short straight blade, a comfortable handle, and a sharp point to take out spots, eyes of potatoes and pineapples, and so on, are desirable.

While a spatula isn't exactly a knife, it is a very handy tool. One about three inches wide and five inches long is handy for turning griddle cakes or meat balls, removing cookies and serving pie; the narrow spatula is convenient for icing cakes, scraping mixing bowls and other little kitchen jobs.

